

## All Here Sail in a River of Light



Katherine L. Gordon

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“I had forgotten how much light there is in the world,  
till you gave it back to me.”

— Ursula K. Le Guin

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Katherine L. Gordon  
**Harmonia Press**

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## SECOND EDITION NOTES

*Restless is the Heart of an Exile* was originally published in *Synaeresis: arts + poetry*

*The Irony of Dust* was originally published in *Afterthoughts*

This Second Edition contains solely poems written by Katherine L. Gordon apart from the collaborative sequence with Andreas Gripp which made up the First Edition in 2014.



## **Absent Spring**

We grow cautious  
in this thin warmth,  
unsure of seasons,  
doubting calendars,  
carrying coats against sudden chill,  
ancient genes rise up in warning  
of an earth grown hostile to itinerants  
searching icy floods for food and water.  
Our customary April is an Innocent Lost,  
few birds have braved migration, droop at  
feeders,  
sky not yet glad.  
Another page of transformation is written,  
sharing and kindness new virtues  
but the virtuous not yet appeared.



## **Not quite a life that banker**

The banker pauses,  
lips pursed  
as a waft of spring  
comes through the thick door,  
forgets his ledger  
for a helter-skelter moment,  
remembers a girl in flowered dress  
when distraction was possible  
before investment shut her out,  
made perfume of season  
null and void.

## That Perplexity of Hope

April so tender, casting  
green shadows on dissolving snow heaps,  
rains at last to swash away grim winter leavings,  
an air to excite even the careful of heart.  
New squirrels nibble on old hoardings,  
seek any offering on a slippery earth,  
teach us to stretch.  
Still sweated  
but perhaps a silk skirt to trace flowers,  
chilly nights of cozy closeness,  
seed packets and garden plans,  
sometimes a strength of sun reviving bones.  
An urge to hold hands in the wonder of re-birth,  
little gifts of shoots replace rabbit hunger-lust,  
the joy of warmer sun, lighter clothes,  
river sounds full and purposeful  
heading with naive fish to a far-off sea.  
Chrysalis-caught in the limbo of Lent,  
a wistful breeze caresses bare heads,  
promising an after-sacrifice feast  
of all the senses overwhelmed.  
White becomes rainbow,  
birdsong our dazzling orchestra.  
Old parts for New calls the magician.  
We revive into that perplexity of hope.

## Reprise

The day before Palm Sunday  
I awake to new message, a card  
with flowers that live off the page  
by my favourite artist  
so intrinsic to the life of flowers.  
I read her poem to the felled cypress,  
understand that loss is too hard to accept,  
foliage and pets that pattern our days  
are taken from us,  
we are left to re-configure  
the borders of our mind.  
I, who now must form a new landscape  
with the storm-loss of so many signal trees,  
understand the task of accepting new patterns.  
I too mourn the cypress.

## **All Here Sail in a River of Light**

The light is made of molten magic  
carved by angels out of that marble dark,  
suffusing all the pictured walls  
and prism windows,  
each particle of me responding.  
The wind flies over woods and water  
bringing stormy change to precarious hollows  
where egg-laden birds cling.  
No caprice of season can call back the light.  
I touch each gilded surface,  
grow golden in the halos,  
know I am alive in this moment  
when every living thing connects  
in filaments of universe entwined,  
a lunar eclipse forecast  
to teach the fickle vagaries  
of a spring-lightning night.

## **To Comfort Starlings**

Called by a light that mocks the cold,  
starling flocks have gathered  
in the Eramosa valley.

They call to each clan in weary cadence,  
clinging in groups to snow-shine branches,  
cold feet, hungry beaks, eye-weary beams  
to ferret hidden food.

They know I am here in the lone stone house.

I break up bread, oats, bits of cat food,  
small offerings to stave an Irish starve.

If only loaves and fishes extended  
to these migrants,  
refugees in a no-mercy climate shift  
we all endure,  
caught by surprise in a lily-white Easter  
no suffering or sacrifice can cure.

## **Restless is the Heart of an Exile**

This little town holds  
a contained and fragile charm  
where my elsewhere-birtherd spirit  
learns to survive.

My sustaining friends candle it into home  
though shadows shimmer in curtained corners.

The land of ancestors buried  
in hard-won sacred soil  
calls out to my waiting bones.

I am forbidden to answer,  
grieve for my moment to come  
when alien soil covers restless remains  
and spirit hovers between  
the world that barely embraces me  
and the pulsing claim of blood and ligament,  
heart, spirit and tribal ties  
that scream for my absorption  
back into fiery particles that stoked my entity.

Wine cannot placate,  
bread of other fields seldom satisfies,  
a communion I must re-learn.

## Understanding Earth Day

Hours of that spring day consumed away  
in the metallic grey of a condo-towered city  
where I held rendezvous  
with hospital sound-clash.  
Earth Day there just another poster  
on a papered kiosk of politics and porn.  
Escape at last to home  
where the woods whispered  
of life renewed,  
of streams slipped free and singing,  
like the hump-backed whales  
celebrating sounding  
in a resurgent pod,  
unaware of planned ships of oil  
to feed spreading cities, whose noise and cargo  
would stifle all sea-glad communication.  
Here the bed-time descendo of sleepy birds  
in fresh-built nests,  
a settling of newly-mated in burrows,  
a quiet of deer, stirring stealth of warm fox,  
all the embrace of one's own wooded place  
in a world that knows ever less  
of adagios of wonder.  
When I opened the bedroom windows,  
though the night was chill,

just for a greedy moment  
I heard the jubilant message,  
every tree alive with the pealing calls  
of tree frogs,  
those daring night-peepers  
who understand Earth Day  
and the hope of Spring.



## **The Irony of Dust**

I thought you were the enemy I fought  
with life-long fervour.  
Fluff in children's hair,  
dust-balls under beds longing to transform  
into new life forms  
with the first lightning bolt.  
Pale powdery palls  
mocking cherished possessions.  
Cobwebs of the mind,  
ashes in the mouth.  
We eat our ancestors,  
vacuum their wisdom away  
to be recycled and descend again.  
Those who thought they burned the witches  
breathed them in.  
Pieces of predator, pieces of prey—star born—  
confront us every day as we absorb them.  
Collective knowledge of the dust unconscious.  
All I momentarily clear away becomes me,  
to settle soon amongst the new tribes.

## **Sewing Shadows**

A dark angel slipped through a slash  
in chill April's rain-heavy sky,  
watching us waiting for a different lumination,  
scattering whiffs of flower and fruit-follow  
from her mended wings.

Each solstice ushers the light  
into long dark  
or lengthening bright,  
leaves us sewing shadows  
to faded forms,  
hoping for some reflection  
when the final turns  
revolve without us.



# Harmonia Press

## Poetry



Katherine L. Gordon lives and writes from a home in the secluded Eramosa Valley in southern Ontario. She is the author of over a dozen books and chapbooks of poetry, and has served as a reviewer and contest adjudicator.

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